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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/27/2016  
TAGS: [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [UNESCO](#) [RW](#)  
SUBJECT: NEW HIGH COUNCIL OF THE PRESS APPOINTMENTS  
UNCONTROVERSIAL AND UNINSPIRED

Classified By: PAO Brian George for reason 1.4 (D)

11. (C) Summary. In June the GOR confirmed new appointments for the country's nine-person High Council of the Press (HCP), which is charged with both regulation of the media and promotion of press freedom in the country. It is hoped that this iteration of the Council (this is the second Council to be appointed since the HCP's creation in 2003) will be able to avoid the personality conflicts that plagued its predecessor. The quest for internal harmony is reflected in their choice of president--a senior and genial newspaper editor unlikely to seek confrontation. Few members of Council appear to possess the experience, desire, or gravitas necessary to turn the HCP into a body that is respected by the media, other government bodies, or the public at large. Nonetheless, the HCP secretariat is optimistic that the body will emerge as an important institution as the capacity of its staff grows. The Embassy is working to support this process of capacity building through a UNESCO Media Support Fund grant and by utilizing the International Visitor program and other PD tools. End Summary.

#### New Members of the HCP

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12. (C) On July 11, the nine-person Council elected its office-bearers (president, vice-president, and secretary). Father Dominique Karekezi, editor of the Catholic Church's Kinyamateka newspaper (Rwanda's oldest paper) and the only hold-over from the original High Council, was elected president. Fellow HCP member Ines Mpambara attributed his election to 1) his status as the eldest member of the Council, and 2) his non-confrontational personality. The first HCP was plagued by internal divisions which stemmed from personality clashes that contributed to the premature departure of the HCP's first president. Karekezi is an affable, experienced journalist but is unlikely to take any action that will pit him against the government. Charles Nahayo, technical director of the public broadcaster (ORINFOR), was elected vice-president and Thais Ruboneka, a junior faculty member from the National University of Rwanda's (NUR) School of Journalism, was elected secretary. Both of the latter are relatively junior GOR appointees.

13. (U) The remaining members of the Council are:

--David Kibuye, managing director of the pro-government &New Times.8 Kibuye is a retired Rwandan Defense Force (RDF) officer who worked for the Rwandan Patriotic Front's (RPF) bush radio station during its guerrilla war. He represents the private media.

--Dr. Venuste Karambizi, currently a lecturer at the Universite Libre de Kigali. Karambizi worked as a journalist prior to the genocide; joined the RPF shortly before the genocide began; and worked for a time in the MFA. He represents civil society.

--Ines Mpambara, currently executive director of the Ministry of Health,s communications office and formerly deputy director of the NUR,s School of Journalism. Mpambara studied in the U.S. on a Fulbright scholarship and has a reputation as a free thinker. She represents the government.

--Gabrielle Uwimana, international media monitor at the Ministry of Information. Uwimana worked with the Embassy to organize a recent conference on political communication for government spokespersons. She is a strong advocate for capacity building among Rwandan journalists and will take her appointment to the HCP very seriously. Trained as a teacher, she had no experience in the media field prior to assuming her current position. She represents the government.

--Prince Bahati, chief editor at the Adventist Church,s radio station. Bahati is a recent university graduate and works for a small, niche market station. His selection seems to reflect a lack of interest on the part of private radio stations--perhaps because of their strong focus on music rather than news programming--in the HCP. He represents the private media.

--Dr. Laurien Nyabyenda, a medical doctor who also represents an NGO focused on family planning issues. He represents civil society.

#### A (Lack of) Vision for the Future?

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14. (C) Early indications are that only a few members of the Council have both a desire to strengthen the HCP and a vision of how that can happen. During meetings with PAO, neither Karekezi nor Kibuye (who was rumored to have been a candidate for the HCP presidency and, by virtue of his position as

director of the &New Times8 is one of the most influential members of Rwanda,s press) offered a vision of what role they would like the HCP to play. Despite the HCP,s many shortcomings, they also were unable or unwilling to share any ideas about how the body could be strengthened. Mpambara (protect), who enjoyed a strong reputation during her tenure at the NUR, said she was surprised by the overall lack of quality of the HCP members. (Comment: Any blame for the weakness of the members should be shared equally by the private media, civil society organizations, public media and the Government, each of which was responsible for its own nominations. End comment). She sees it has her role on the HCP to ask a lot of questions and make sure that her colleagues at least debate the important issues. (Comment Particularly striking was the seemingly indifferent attitude of Karekezi, given his position as president and the fact that he brings to his new position three years of experience on the HCP. When pressed by PAO concerning the Council's apparent lack of interest/involvement in some high profile cases concerning Rwandan journalists or media outlets, Karekezi asked &What do you expect us to do?8 given that the HCP has no authority over organizations such as the Rwandan National Police and other government agencies. That being said, Mpambara said she was more disappointed by the selection of vice president and secretary than by Karekezi,s election as president. Having a weak president would not necessarily be a bad thing, she noted, if the other members of the Council could steer him in the direction they want. End comment)

15. (U) Despite, or perhaps as a result of, the apparent weakness of the Council, Patrice Mulama, executive secretary of the HCP, expressed confidence that the organization will in time become an important and respected institution. Mulama recognizes that his staff needs additional training in order to fulfill the organization's mandate and is open to outside support. To that end, PAO worked with Mulama to develop a request for UNESCO Media Support Funds to provide training for HCP staff and members on media law and regulation, media ethics, and to help the organization develop a communications and advocacy strategy that will make it more effective in fighting turf wars with other GOR bodies

and make it more responsive to domestic and international constituencies. All parties in Rwanda recognize, however, that the development of quality independent journalists is critical to enshrining press freedom in the country. There continues to be high level interest in the creation of a media training institute in Kigali to provide working journalists--a large percentage of whom have no formal training in the field-- with an opportunity to improve their skills. Preliminary indications are that USAID will be able to contribute toward the establishment of this training institute. If the funding is confirmed, the announcement will be received enthusiastically by the GOR and private media alike.

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